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# Ethical Consumption (Assignment)

Nadia Dawisha

*University of North Carolina*

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Nadia Dawisha

Summary and rationale for assignment, 8-10 page paper

**I. Part one:**

- a. Read the posts related to ethical consumption, and pick one area to focus on. This can include technology and conflict minerals, fashion, or food.
- b. Take a look at your closet/technology/food pantry. Of all of your items, how many could you locate its place of origin and who made it?
- c. Take one of the items and try to track its supply chain. This should include:
  - 1) Whether this company pays their workers a living wage, so try to calculate how much each person was paid along the supply chain.
  - 2) Where was your item made? Investigate the meaning behind a label. For example, does a 'Made in the USA label' indicate the 'cut and sew' point of production, or where it was designed? What is the difference?
  - 3) How complex is your supply chain? Does your product only come from one country, or were different parts made in different locations? How many people were involved in the making of your product? What is the difference between a vertically-integrated and horizontally-integrated company? What would a vertically-integrated company look like?
  - 4) Do research on the company and their CSR. Do they have a history of labor violations? Of trafficking? Examine their media coverage and framing. Is this company covered in the media frequently for their sustainability efforts? How are they framed? How do they choose to frame themselves? Consider how we discussed how in the aftermath of the factory fires in Bangladesh, there was a prominent frame of different actors 'shifting responsibility' to others.
  - 5) What is the environmental footprint of your product? Do research not just on the footprint that say, your cotton shirt or bag of lettuce shipped from abroad leaves behind, but also on whether any potentially hazardous chemicals are in your product (you may want to refer to resources such as Greenpeace for this information, as well as my blog), as well as biodegradability of these products (when considering the issue of landfills).
  - 6) Does the product you are researching have a link to stated commitments on their social media outlets? What rhetorical strategies do they use on their website to convince their consumers of a

transparent supply chain? Based on your research, do these claims of transparency and accountability live up to their actual commitments? (consider how the Gap, for example, has a site stating their 'commitments' and have yet to renovate one of their factories).

6) Using this information, map out what a transparent company would look like. Feel free to take companies that are considered to be highly transparent companies, such as Alta Gracia and Honest By. Consider what sustainability, transparency and accountability means to you? If a company uses organic materials but outsources its labor to China, what would it take to make the company more transparent in its labor policies?

## **II. Part two: Social Justice/educational awareness component**

1) The second half of your project will be to take the information you have learned and present it to a public forum. This could be in the form of your own blog, a documentary, a television show for public access, a recycling initiative, an op-ed to the student newspaper regarding university sustainability, a public performance or art piece, and more! Be creative, and remember, the point here is to present your research and ideas in a manner that engages with the public, informs, and inspires.

## **III. Citations**

1. You must reference at least three books and ten articles that were not included in any of the articles in the Listen Girlfriends blog. MLA or APA accepted.

Bio: I am a PhD candidate at the University of North Carolina, where I teach media literacy and cultural studies. I am currently researching sustainability issues within the fashion industry, and I use fashion as a platform to consolidate my spectrum of passions and raise awareness about different issues, which include labor exploitation, gender, cultural studies, media criticism, and sustainability.

I also come from an advocacy background, specifically in labor issues and immigrant rights. I started my blog, Listen Girlfriends, as a way to advocate for and educate others on the causes I truly believe in. I also wanted to create a space for public dialogue and debate, especially on issues and causes that may not get enough exposure in our mainstream media and culture. My blog has officially been approved by my dissertation committee as auto-ethnographic methodology for my research, where I will be looking at other fashion and sustainability blogs that attempt to disrupt and offer alternative spaces to the neoliberal project.

Blog: <http://listengirlfriends.wordpress.com/>